

Lafayette Historical Society

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LAFAYETTE!

The April 18 Potluck Dinner of the Lafayette Historical Society was a delightful success as past and present City Council members shared their experiences, hopes and plans. City Manager, Ernie Marriner was the perfect master of ceremonies as he held each speaker to the time allotted with wit and humor!

Special thanks to Donn Black and to program chairman, Elizabeth Johnston for arranging this tenth anniversary program.

A highlight of the enjoyable evening was the presentation of two honorary life memberships in the Lafayette Historical Society--recipients were Sybil Brown Wilkinson and Alice McNeil Russi. In presenting these honors, Society president, Lou Repetto quoted from the wording of the certificates which were given--to Sybil Brown Wilkinson..."as a native of Lafayette, born in the home of Elam Brown, Founder of Lafayette." and to Alice McNeil Russi..."as a native of Lafayette, the daughter of Gertrude and Robert Elam McNeil, owners of the Pioneer Store from 1902 to 1935."

Ed Stokes deserves special thanks for his generous gift of wine for the evening!

Also, thanks to the devoted kitchen workers-- Jean Baker, Ellie Fisher, Martha Gridley, Sandy Kimball, and Edith Viguers--without them, things could not have gone so smoothly!

THE PIONEER HOUGH FAMILY

Robert Hough of Orinda, descendent of early Lafayette pioneers, met with Angela Broadhead and Fern Davis recently when he gave copies of Hough letters and papers to the historical collection.

From his extensive memorabilia he gave copies of the 1860 love letters from his great grandfather, Orlando of Lafayette, to his fiancée, Emmeline, in the state of New York. Two of them contain his proposal of marriage and her acceptance. The historical society already has copies of nearly 100 Hough letters which describe life in Lafayette in the 1860's and 1870's. Other papers were given: the passport for Orlando who came to Lafayette via ship and the Isthmus

of Panama. The signature on this official document is that of Seward of "Seward's Folly" fame; a check for \$200 sent overland in 1863 by Wells Fargo Express for Orlando's and his mother's passage from his father, Sylvanus, in Lafayette.

Hough's collection of family history came from Carrie Hough Van Meter's home in Lafayette after her death. Carrie was Robert's great aunt and daughter of Orlando. Old timers will remember the old Hough home on Mt. Diablo Blvd. (on what is now the Safeway parking lot) build by Hough in the 1860's. Carrie was born there and lived in the house for about 80 years. She and Jennie Bickerstaff were school mates and close friends all of their lives. Carrie was Lafayette Postmistress for 27 years from 1902 and cith librarian until the early 1950's.

The last Hough landmark was wiped out when Hough Ave. was recently renamed "Lafayette Circle" by the developers of the circle and the City Council.

SILENT COMMITTEE HARD AT WORK

Ruth Holton, Peggy Craig, Fern Powell Davis and Betsy Willcuts are continually at work clipping news items of interest to the Society. Ruth Holton laminates important articles with a protective plastic before they are placed in the Society's files at the Lafayette Public Library. The Lafayette Historical Society thanks you all for your continuing efforts!

DISPLAYS

In mid-June, a special exhibit related to "Old Betsy" will be featured at Lafayette Federal Savings and Loan. Be sure to stop by to learn more about Lafayette's first fire engine.

NEW MEMBERS

Spring has brought a fine crop of new members--welcome to the following:

Donn Elack, Bill and Betty Zion, Gene and Lee Millard, Lynn and David Hiden, Harold and Barbara Butzback, Steven and Sandra Strobel, Dr. and Mrs. Robert van Galder, John Bailey, Jr., Bill and Karin Eames, Prudence Marriner, and Robert Rosenberg.

A SPECIAL DONATION

Many thanks to Lloyd Townley who donated half of the surplus remaining in his campaign fund following the recent City Council elections to the Historical Society "for the specific purpose of helping the restoration of the fire engine". The other half of the fund went to the Lamorinda Youth Employment Service. Mr. Townley's check for \$133.46 will be put to good use for "Old Betsy"!

WALKING TOURS

Did you know that the Society gives walking Historical Tours of Lafayette? Two groups of young Burton school students enjoyed tours in May--Betsy Willcuts and Mary McIvor have been recruited to help the Walking Tour Chairman with these historical treats.